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May 3, 1956

Hon. Dwight D. Eisenhower,
President of the United States,
The White House,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

Your well-wishers have again been bitterly disappointed this year by your evident inability to make the necessary drastic cuts in Government spending which are absolutely essential to the American capitalistic system. The socialistic bureaucracy and the leftist one-party press which poison the air of Washington seem to have largely inhibited any constructive efforts in this direction.

Probably most executive departments could work more efficiently if their personnel were cut by 25%, but in some cases much larger economies are possible.

The foreign give-away program has been made more ludicrous than ever by gifts to Communist Poland and Tito, as well as to Nehru and Soekarno. Republican candidates know well that they must repudiate such follies if they are to have any chance of election.

Among the wilder new extravagances in the new budget is a billion or so for so-called Federal aid to education. The real trouble with American education in the past 25 years has not been lack of funds, but faulty leadership of the National Education Association and the Teachers' Colleges. The controlling hierarchy has been more interested in teaching the children collectivism than in sharpening their thinking processes. This is the real basis, whether admitted or not, of abolishing competitive marks, and granting automatic promotions. These dangerous doctrinaire show no great concern that these policies have led to juvenile doltishness and delinquency on a grand scale. Furthermore, the absurd scheme of these "frontier thinkers" to dispense with the alphabet in reading instruction, and revert to picture reading based on the configuration of words, has alone without question set back the instruction of pupils by at least a whole year, besides depriving them of the invaluable logical training derived from the building letters into syllables, and syllables into words. This "progressive" method of picture-reading is nothing but

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even worse than primitive pre-alphabetical scripts of three thousand years ago, for at least the pictures then used had some relation to the ideas they represented, while words spelled alphabetically of course have no pictorial significance whatever.

Recently embarrassed by the outbursts of angry parents who have just learned why Johnny can't read, the educationists, dictators while too proud to admit their gross blunder, have taken refuge in the excuse that they now use a combination of alphabetical and picture reading, - such as if a teacher of arithmetic, caught teaching that two and two make five, offered to compromise on four and a half!

When the "modern" rulers of education have made such a mess out of such a simple problem as reading instruction, one can guess how well they have handled the more complex subjects. Nothing could be more foolish than to give these bureaucrats more power in the form of Federal aid. They should be left to be dealt with at the local level by the thousands of fine teachers and millions of parents and taxpayers whom they have shamelessly abused and deceived for the last 25 years. At the same time, the Federal Bureau of Education, which has been either their dupe or their protagonist, might well be abolished, to save money for the taxpayers and make doubly clear that education is a local matter, not to be meddled with by our vastly overgrown Federal establishment.

Faithfully yours,

WATSON WASHBURN

W.W.:MS

P.S.--The following wise thoughts which you expressed as President of Columbia University in 1949 seem more appropriate than ever now:

"I would flatly oppose any grant by the Federal Government to all states in the Union for educational purposes. Such a policy would completely destroy and defeat the watchful economy that comes through local supervision over local expenditures or revenues." Very frankly, I firmly believe that the army of persons who urge greater and greater centralization of authority and greater dependence upon the Federal Treasury are really more dangerous than any external threat that can be arrayed against us."

W.W.

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